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Moral consciousness and communicative action: From discourse ethics to spiritual transformation

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ABSTRACT

This paper strives to make a critical assessment of the claim of discourse ethics, as articulated by Jurgen Habermas, to meet with the challenges of moral consciousness and communicative action today. The paper locates Habermas's theory of discourse ethics in the contemporary movement to remoralize institutions and to build a post-conventional moral theory. The paper describes Habermas's agenda and looks into incoherences in his project in accordance with his own norms. Beginning with an internal critique of Habermas, the paper, however, is engaged in an interrogation of the Habermasian agenda from outside its own frame of reference precisely because the issues that the discovered tensions raise can not be resolved within the rationalist framework of Habermas. The paper argues that in order to realise the lofty agenda of transformation that discourse ethics sets for itself, it must now make a dialogue with critical and practical sprituality. The paper gives a brief sketch of the agenda of spiritual transformations that can help discourse ethics solve some of its own stated problems such as the problems of anthropocentrism and cognitive distantiation and be a transformative agent in thinking through the theory and practice of moral consciousness and communicative action today.

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> In his stress on performative competence Habermas consistently privileges speaking over hearing or listening... In the Theory of Communicative Action, a categorical distinction is drawn between "cognitive -instrumental" and "communicative rationality" but the distinction is dubious given that both are modes of formal reasoning
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> Fred Dallmayr (1991),
> Life-World, Modernity and Critique:
> **Paths Between Heidegger and Frankfurt School,**
> p. 24, p.11.

> The speculative employment of reason *with respect* to nature leads to the absolute necessity of some supreme cause of *the world*: the practical employment of reason *with a view to freedom* leads also to absolute necessity, but only of *the laws of the actions* of a rational being as such. Now it is an essential *principle* of reason, however, employed, to push its knowledge to a consciousness of its *necessity,*. It is however, an equally essentially *restriction* of the same reason that it can neither *discern the necessity* of what is or what happens... [Reason] cannot enable us to conceive the absolute necessity of our unconditional practical law.
>
> Immanuel Kant (1981) *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Ethics,*
> p.101 (emphases, as in original)

> In the wake of metaphysics, philosophy surrenders its extraordinary status. Explosive experiences of the extraordinary have migrated into an art that has become autonomous. Of course, even after this deflation, ordinary life, now fully profane, by no means becomes immune to the shattering and subversive intrusion of extraordinary events. Viewed from without, religion, which has largely been deprived of its worldview functions, is still indispensable in ordinary life for normalizing intercourse with the extraordinary. For this reason, even postmetaphysical thinking continues to coexist with religious practice - and not merely in the sense of the contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous. This ongoing coexistence even throws light on a curious dependence of a philosophy that has forfeited its contact with the extraordinary. Philosophy, even in its postmetaphysical form, will be able neither to replace nor to repress religion as long as religious language is the bearer of a semantic content that is inspiring and even indispensable, for this content eludes (for the time being?) the explanatory force of philosophical language and continues to resist translation into reasoning discourses.
>
> Jurgen Habermas (1992),
> *Postmetaphysical Thinking* p.51

The Problem

The contemporary moment is characterized by unmet challenges both in theory and practice. Processes of change at work in individual social systems as well as interaction among different societies in the global ecumene bring to the fore the unfinished task lying before us with regard to moral consciousness and communicative action. Now because of globalisation, as "moral issues stemming from cultural diversity...that used to arise mainly between societies now increasingly arise within them" (Geertz 1986: 115), the nature of interaction between different cultures with widely variant moral standards and the development of a critical reflective consciousness on the part of the actors where moral issues are not easily disposed of either through a convenient relativism or universalism is an epochal challenge before us. Similar is the task when we come to individual social systems as they are characterized by pervasive structural differentiations and as in these societies "morality gets no clear status in the construction of a structurally differentiated life world" (Habermas 1987a: 92). A related issue here is the unprecedented crisis of institutions that characterizes individual social systems to cope with the contemporary dynamics of change in self, society and culture. For many insightful critics, our contemporary dilemmas are also significantly institutional, inasmuch as they spring from the irrelevance of existing institutions and lack of availability of new institutions to guide our private lives and the public sphere. These institutional dilemmas are primarily "moral dilemmas" (Bellah et al 1991: 38) which call for a new moral language to think about our institutions as they are now ridden with "unprecedented problems" (Bellah et al 1991: 42). For instance, reflecting on contemporary American society Robert Bellah and his colleagues argue that in the face of the challenge of the present

and the dislocations of the post-industrial transition there is an urgency to think of "democracy as an ongoing moral quest", not simply as a political process — "as an end state" (Bellah et al 1991: 20). They are emphatic in their proposition that we currently need a new "moral ecology" to think creatively about institutions — their predicament and possibility since "the decisions that are made about our economy, our schools, our government, of our national position in the world cannot be separated from the way we live in practical terms, the *moral life we lead as a people* (Bellah et al 1191: 42; emphasis added).

The imperative for a moral grounding of institutions in contemporary practice is paralleled by reflective developments in theory as well. This is most evident in the restructuring of theory from structure to reflective self in thinking through moral consciousness and communicative action. Most important sign of this restructuring is the theory of "post conventional" morality developed by psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg. In Kohlberg's theory of moral development one's moral consciousness is not a mere appendix to social conventions and one is able to differentiate oneself "from the rule and expectation of others" and differentiates one's "values in terms of self-chosen ethical principles" (Cortese 1990: 20). The idea of post-conventional morality rescues moral consciousness from unreflective sociologism where morality is looked upon as an extension of social norms and cultural expectations and brings critical reflection to its very core. In this move from unreflective sociologism to critical reflection, the self-justificatory systems of society and culture are critically lived, analyzed, and transcended by seeking actors in quest of justice, well-being, and freedom.

The current idea of post-conventional morality has a long pedigree in critical and transformation-seeking social theory which can be drawn at least back to John Dewey's insightful distinction between customary and reflective morality at the tum of the century. For Dewey, "the question of what ends a man should live for does not arise as a general problem in customary morality. It is forestalled by the habits and institutions which a person finds existing all around him" (Dewey 1960: 29). "There can, however, be no such thing as reflective morality except where men seriously ask by what purposes they should direct their conduct and why they should do so; what is which make their purposes good" (Dewey 1960: 30). The fact that reflective morality is accompanied by a scheme of critical evaluation is clearly stated by Dewey: "Reflection has its normal function in placing the objects of desire in a perspective of relative values so that when we give up one good we do it because we see another which is of greater worth and which evokes a more inclusive and more enduring desire" (Dewey 1960: 35).

The work of Jurgen Habermas, an important interlocutor of our time who has engaged seeking souls in reflection on the present challenges of human emancipation, is a significant contribution to both the idea of post-conventional morality and the contemporary discourse of moral transformation of institutions. Habermas's work reflects the challenge of theory and practice outlined above. His *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* is an important contribution to the idea of post-conventional morality with his distinction between critical moral reflection and ethical substantialism. He is also a systematic and transformation-seeking critic of institutional life under late capitalism where his political criticism employs not only the familiar variables of class and power but also the less familiar ones of moral consciousness and communicative action. Habermas has written extensively on specific issues in history and development in Germany as well as on the wider questions of the history and discourse of modernity. Through Habermas is too easily categorized as the most prominent member of the contemporary European Left, his agenda has always involved a wider critical engagement, critiquing the conventional theories and methods of Marxism as well. In that sense, he has always pursued his task as a critic of the existing methods and systems. In his recent work, Habermas has, championed the cause of radical democracy, one important aspect of which is the moral renewal of individuals and the public sphere (Habermas 1990b; 1994). Habermas argues that the task of human emancipation today requires a moral approach along with the familiar models of political action. Consider, for instance, the persistent question of poverty and disadvantage in advanced industrial societies. For Habermas, while in the classical phase of capitalism capital and labour could threaten each other for pursuing their interests, today "this is no longer the case" (Habermas 1990b : 19). Now the underprivileged can make their predicament known only through a "protest vote" but "without the electoral support of a majority of citizens...problems of this nature do not even have enough driving force to be adopted as a topic of broad and effective public debate" (Habermas 1990b: 20). In this situation, for Habermas, a moral consciousness diffusing the entire public sphere is crucial for tackling the problem of poverty and disadvantage. As Habermas argues: "a dynamic self-correction cannot be set in motion without introducing morals into the debate, without universalizing interests from a normative point of view" (ibid). The same imperative also confronts us in addressing contemporary global problems such as environmental

disaster, world poverty and the North-South divide. It is "clear that the increasing gap between the First and the Third world raises some of the most difficult moral questions of the modern world" (Hosle 1992: 229). Habermas also argues that in addressing these problems we need a moral perspective, as he writes: In the words of Habermas:

> these problems can only be brought to a head by rethinking topics morally, by universalizing interests in a more or less discursive form xx The moral or ethical point of view makes us quicker to perceive the more far-reaching, and simultaneously less insistent and more fragile, ties that bind the fate of an individual to that of every other-making even the most alien person a member of one's community (Habermas 1990b: 20)

In this paper, I strive to make a critical assessment of the work of Habermas with regard to his own stated goal of transformation. I begin with Habermas's own assumptions such as "linguistification of sacred" in the field of moral consciousness and strive to look into incoherences in his project considered in accordance with its own norms. In other words, what I am interested in, to begin with, is an internal critique of the Habermasian agenda of transformation. In this way, I share similar goal with the noted Habermas scholar Thomas McCarthy who sums up the objective of his critical engagement: "Rather than confronting Habermas's ideas with objections from competing theoretical traditions, I hope to bring out tensions in those ideas themselves" (McCarthy 1992: 52). But while I am interested in bringing out tensions in Habermas's ideas I am also engaged in interrogating Habermas's agenda from outside its own frame of reference precisely because the issues that these tensions raise cannot be resolved within its own frame. Thus, the tradition where I move towards from Habermas's own frame of reference is the tradition of spiritual criticism and spiritual transformation. While Habermas scholar Robert J. Antonio argues that the "secular and intersubjective tum in critical theory begun by Habermas can be completed by encouraging a broader dialogue with pragmatism" (Antonio 1989:74), I submit that it is the question pertaining to intersubjectivity that requires an opening towards processes of spiritual transformation and criticism. What I argue is that critical theory now must make a dialogue with critical and practical spirituality in order to achieve its own stated objective of human transformation.

Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action : Habermas's Agenda

Habermas argues that at the contemporary juncture where the sacred no longer has the unquestioned authority that it once had, morality can no longer be grounded in religion. Rather it has to emerge out of and be anchored in a process of rational argumentation where the actors participate in undistorted communication as members of a community of discourse. For Habermas, the rise of the public sphere of rational argumentation and rationally-motivated communicative action goes hand in hand with the relocation of the sacred from the domain of the "Unspeakable" to our everyday world of language, making it both an object and medium of our ordinary conversation. Habermas's moral theory has to be understood in his evolutionary framework of the "Linguistification of the Sacred" (Habermas 1987a) and the "Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere" (Habermas 1989).[1] Habermas believes that morality, anchored in and emerging out of the rational arguments of participants in discourse, can fill the void created by the demise of the sacred order.

The idea of a rational society and an "ideal communication community" is central to Habermas's agenda of morality. In his emphasis on rationality, Habermas is "closest to the Kantian tradition" (McCarthy in Habermas 1987a: vii).[2] Both for Kant and Habermas, "calculations of rational choice generate recommendations relevant to the pursuit of contingent purposes in the light of given preferences", and "when serious questions of value arise deliberation on who one is, and who one wants to be, yields ethical advice concerning the good life" (ibid). Like Kant, Habermas understands "practical reason as universal in import: it is geared to what everyone could rationally will to be a norm binding on everyone else" (ibid). Habermas's discourse ethics, however, "replaces Kant's categorical Imperative with a procedure of moral argumentation", shifting "the frame of reference from Kant's solitary, reflecting moral consciousness to the community of moral subjects in dialogue" (McCarthy in Habermas 1990a: vii).

For Habermas, "the projection of an ideal communication community serves as a guiding thread for setting up discourses" (Habermas 1990a). Those who participate in this communication community have an

urge to participate in not only communication but also in a discursive transformation, where "in the relationship between the Self and the Other there is a basic moment of insight" (ibid). Habermas quotes George Herbert Mead, whose work he values a lot and whom he considers as one of the main inspirations behind his theory of communicative action, programmatically: "What is essential to communication is that the symbol should arouse in oneself what it arouses in the other individual" (Habermas 1987a: 15). Habermas tells us: "I think all of us feel that one must be ready to recognize the interests of others even when they run counter to our own, but the person who does that *does not really sacrifice himself, but becomes a larger self*" (Habermas 1987a: 94; emphasis added).

For Habermas, an urge for justification of norms that guide individual action is very much part of being human. Though Habermas is dismissive of questions of ontology he proceeds with two basic assumptions about man, viz., that he has a need for communication and an urge for justification.[3] Habermas argues: "From the perspective of first persons, what we consider justified is not a function of custom but a question of justification or grounding' (Habermas 1990a: 20). This universal need for justification has a special manifestation in modem societies where all norms have now "at least in principle lost their customary validity" (Habermas 1988: 227). In this context, the procedure of rational argumentation, which is the other name of "discourse ethics", fulfills this need for justification and provides the "discursive redemption of normative claims of validity" (Habermas 1990a: 103).

Habermas argues that the realization of moral consciousness is based upon our ability to take a hypothetical attitude to the "form of life and personal life history" that has shaped our identities (Habermas 1990a: 104). But those who are uncritical about their socialization by and immersion in the society and culture to which they belong are incapable of taking a hypothetical attitude towards these since they fail to realize that though every form of life presents itself as the best possible form of "good life", it is the task of moral consciousness to go beneath such taken-for granted assumptions and self-proclaimed truths.[4] It is here that participation in the procedure of practical discourse functions as a redeeming process. First of all, it breaks the illusion of the "good life" that has been associated with a particular form of life by the force of custom and habit. While the "formal" ethics of a society binds us to its order and scheme of evaluation, discourse ethics breaks this bondage and enables us to understand our own self as well as the validity of our culture from the point of view of justice. Habermas tells us that "the universalization principle of practical discourse acts like a knife that makes razor-sharp cuts between evaluative statements, and strictly normative ones, between the good and the just" (ibid).

It is this concern for justice[5] that creates an incessant thrust towards problematization, laying bare the moral problems within our taken-for-granted cultures. For Habermas, a "thrust towards problematization" is essential for moral consciousness to emerge and to be at work in the context of the life world (Habermas 1990a: 107). Habermas tells us how in the normal circumstances of what he calls "ethical formalism" this problematization is not possible.[6] But participation in discourse ethics enables the participants to look at one's own culture critically, where criticism means discovering whether the "suggested modes of togethemess genuinely hang together" or not (see Neville 1974: 189). Habermas argues that "for the hypotheses-testing participant in a discourse, the relevance of the experiential context of his life world tends to pale" (Habermas 1990a: 107). Habermas believes that "under the unrelenting moralizing gaze of the participants in discourse...familiar institutions can be transformed into so many instances of problematic justice" (Habermas 1990a: 108).

Critical Discussion of the Idea of Discourse Ethics : Habermas's Self-Criticism

Habermas argues that the abstractive requirements in discourse ethics provide actors a cognitive advantage, a capacity for distantiation. But this cognitive distantiation is not enough either for the practice of discourse ethics or for the realization of moral consciousness. It calls for parallel emotional maturity, adequate motivational anchoring and growth. He argues that "cognition, empathy, and agape" must be integrated in our moral consciousness especially when we are engaged in the "hermeneutic activity of applying universal norms in a context-sensitive manner" (Habermas 1990a: 182). Thus he argues, reminding us of Christian imperatives for love and care, that "concern for the fate of one's neighbour is a necessary emotional prerequisite for the cognitive operations expected of participants in discourse" (ibid). This integration of cognitive distantiation and

emotional care is particularly required when the initial separation between morality and ethical life is to be overcome. He is aware of the difficulties that this separation poses for the practice of morality. Thus he is not content to leave his agenda only at the "deontological level" like Kant. He is interested to bring back morality as a guide for action and reflection into practice. Habermas himself writes: "moral issues are never raised for their own sake; people raise them by seeking a guide for action. For this reason the demotivated solutions that post-conventional morality finds for decontextualized issues must be reinserted into practical life. If it is to become effective in practice, morality has to make up for the loss of concrete ethical life that it incurred when it pursued a cognitive advantage" (Habermas 1990a: 179). This opening has to be achieved through "an integration of cognitive operations and emotional dispositions and attitude" that characterizes "the mature capacity for moral judgment" (Habermas 1990a: 182). Thus he argues, reminding us of Christian imperatives for love and care, that "concern for the fate of one's neighbour is a necessary emotional prerequisite for the cognitive operations expected of participants in discourse" (ibid). This integration of cognitive distantiation and emotional care is particularly required when the initial separation between morality and ethical life is to be overcome. He is aware of the difficulties that this separation poses for the practice of morality. Thus he is not content to leave his agenda only at the "deontological level" like Kant. He is interested to bring back morality as a guide for action and reflection into practice, as he writes: "moral issues are never raised for their own sake; people raise them by seeking for action. For this reason the demotivated solutions that post-conventional morality finds for decontextualized issues must be reinserted into practical life. If it is to become effective in practice, morality has to make up for the loss of concrete ethical life that it incurred when it pursued a cognitive advantage" (Habermas 1990a: 179). This opening has to be achieved through "an integration of cognitive operations and emotional dispositions and attitude" that characterizes "the mature capacity for moral judgment" (Habermas 1990a: 182).

Though a notion of universal human justice is central to Habermas' perspective on moral consciousness, Habermas himself takes great care to emphasize that morality must obey both the principles of justice and solidarity; it must achieve an integration of 'the ethics of love and ethics of justice". While the first "postulates equal respect and equal rights for the individual", the second "postulates empathy and concern for the well-being of one's neighbour" (Habermas 1990a: 200). For him "morality cannot protect the rights of the individual without also protecting the well-being of the community to which he belongs" (ibid). Thus criticism of the taken-for-granted ways of life must be accompanied by a concern for the community. He argues that moral criticism of the unreflective ethical substantialism of society must not be external or marginal but must be an act of connected criticism "where a critic earns his authority or fails to do so by arguing with his fellows" (Walzer 1988: 33). What is important to note is that both these concerns, for him , "should flow from an adequate description of the highest stage of morality itself" (Habermas 1990a: 182).

Discourse and Moral Consciousness
The Limits of the Habermasian Approach

But though Habermas speaks of the need for "adequate description of the highest stage of morality itself", he himself does not inquire into the nature and height of this stage. For him, it is the public sphere which constitutes this highest stage. Habermas speaks of appropriate emotional development and reflective engagement for the project of critical moral reflection to have its desired effect on individuals in society. But he does not look into the issue of how far his own rational approach can facilitate this. Participation in mutually transforming dialogue, which is the key feature of Habermas's discourse ethics, raises the question of intersubjectivity — the mode of relationship between the self and the other. But the whole question of intersubjectivity — its realization and its needed rich description — for a project of morality to succeed is missing from Habermas.[7]

The question for us here is what kind of relationship between the Self and the Other is envisaged in discourse ethics — whether the self and the other are just talking to each other in discourse ethics or the non-self is also part of the self. In this context, McCarthy argues that Habermas' agenda only refers to ethical self-clarification and "ethical self-clarification itself cannot get us beyond the value differences that may result from it" (McCarthy 1992: 62). It is perhaps for this reason that Zygmunt Bauman writes: "a post modern ethics would be the one that readmits the other as a neighbour into the hard core of the moral self..an ethics that recasts the other as the crucial character in the process through which the moral self

comes into its own" (Bauman 1993: 84). But the process of this dialectic between Self and Other is not only rational but also spiritual. As Robert Bellah et al argue, paying attention to the needs of the other is a spiritual process. In their words: "...as in the religious examples, we mean to use attention normatively...in the sense of 'mindfulness' as the Buddhists put it, an openness to the leadings of God, as the Quakers say" (Bellah et al 1991: 256).

The problem with the Habermasian discourse ethics is also its strength, namely its emphasis on rationality. Rationality is an important starting point but there are problems when it is made the be all or end all in life, as it is in the approach of Habermas. Rationality also defines the task of philosophical engagement for Habermas. Habermas strongly believes that it is a rational philosophy of science that is not scientistic which holds the key to the overcoming of the confusion in which moral consciousness finds itself today (Habermas 1981).[8] But though Habermas distinguishes between instrumental reason and communicative reason and is an ardent critic of modern positivism, his communicative rational agenda still has its limits in coming to terms with the challenge of transforming moral awareness into a basis of transformative communicative action. Bernard Williams' argument in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* is of crucial significance here: "How truthfulness to an existing self or society is to be combined with reflection, self-understanding and criticism is a question that philosophy itself cannot answer. It is the kind of question that has to be answered through reflective living" (Williams 1985: 200). To be fair to Habermas, Habermas himself is aware of the need for reflective living but not sensitive to its manifold dimensions.

Moral issues raise questions which are not merely rational but also spiritual. This is a point argued by two important interlocutors of our times, namely Charles Taylor and Govind Chandra Pande, who incidentally come from two different traditions. For Taylor, to speak of moral consciousness is to speak of the qualitative distinction between the higher and the lower desire or scheme of things, a realization which is dependent on spiritual enlightenment.[9]

Moral questions inevitably raise questions of ontology — the nature of the actor and the quality of her depth dimension. Though Habermas makes a distinction between ego identity and role identity and speaks of self-reflection in the context of the therapeutic dialogue of the actors (Habermas 1972, 1979), he does not address the ontological question, vis-a-vis moral consciousness. In this he seems to be carried away by the modernist preference for epistemology to ontology. But Taylor here urges us to proceed cautiously. For Taylor, "the whole way in which we think, reason, argue and question ourselves about morality supposes that our moral reactions" are "not only 'gut' feelings but also implicit acknowledgments of claims concerning their objects" (Taylor 1989: 7). "The various ontological accounts try to articulate these claims. The temptations to deny this, which arise from modem epistemology, are strengthened by the widespread accepting of a deeply wrong model of practical reasoning, one based on an illegitimate extrapolation from reasoning in natural science" (ibid).

Moral ontology is not confined to spiritual ontology alone but is an important part of it. Moral notion requires a reflective self whose source is spiritual. For Taylor, an inquiry into the sources of the self "is not only a phenomenological account but an exploration of the limits of the conceivable in human life, an account of its transcendental conditions" (Taylor 1989: 32). Govind Chandra Pande also makes a similar argument. For him , "It is only a self which is conscious of its ideal universality that can distinguish values from appetites, pleasures and selfish interests and can become the moral subject. It is the question of the ideal self which is the source of the moral law on which social unity and coherence depends. The ideal self is not an abstract transcendental subject in which immediacy and coherence or non-contradiction both coalesce" (Pande 1982: 113). Pande's ideal self is spiritual in its source, actualization, and imagination. Pande draws on the concept of man in Indian tradition where it is believed that spirituality is an important dimension of self and identity (see Pande 1985, 1989, 1991,1992). But this is also true in traditions of spirituality in the West which, as Taylor argues, have encouraged "detachment from identities given by particular historical communities" (Taylor 1989: 37).

Habermas takes for granted that the sacred has become part of modem rational language; he calls this "the linguistification of the sacred". But this view of the modem condition is coloured by Protestant religious experience where religious engagement is not only subservient to the process of rationalization at work in society but also to the power of the word. Habermas's theory of linguistification of sacred is based upon a tradition like Protestantism which privileges words over silence in religious engagement. But this may not be

so in the Catholic tradition and certainly not so in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions where silence is very much part of reflection: in fact, silence is the source of critical reflection and transforming utterances in acts of discourse. Habermasian discourse ethics is based upon a very naive view of religion and religious evolution in the modern societies. In this context, Robert J. Antonio's critique of Habermas is particularly true of his notion of linguistification of sacred: "the problem of formalism can be overcome, and the true limits of immanent critique clarified, only after all the pseudohistorical baggage is left behind" (Antonio 1989: 741).

Habermas's discourse ethics is procedural[10] but is not serious about the preparation required of participants to take part in the procedure and also does not address the question of normative direction. Habermas does not address the ontological preparation required of actors to listen and hear in the process of conversation. It is perhaps for this reason that even such a sympathetic critic of Habermas as Thomas McCarthy argues that arguments in which actors are engaged in discourse ethics "themselves remain tied to specific contexts of action and experience and thus are not able wholly to transcend the struggle between Max Weber's warring gods and demons" (McCarthy 1992: 58). This problem can be overcome by opening oneself to spiritual awareness which would enable the actors to "transcend the struggle between warring gods and demons." Participation in spiritual practice or what is called *sadhana* is a process of multi-dimensional critical movement. First, it is a process of discovering a higher self within oneself — one which is characterized by more intimate subjectivity. Spiritual transformation also involves transforming the base of society or the infrastructure of society. It requires transforming the structures of society which subjects human beings into indignity and exploitation. Spirituality has a dimension of institutional criticism as well, which as argued below, is most evident in traditions of prophetic criticism.

If ethics has to do with the challenge of the other, then spirituality as a transformative seeking of values in both inner freedom and in more genuine bonds of intersubjectivity helps us to invite the Other into the Self. If every dialectic inevitably has a process of self-reflection[11] this is also true of the dialectic of self and the other and spiritual transformation of the consciousness of actors makes this dialectic more reflective. As Taylor argues of the spiritual point of view, vis-a-vis St. Augustine: "...radical reflexivity takes on a new status, because it is the space in which we come to encounter God, in which we affect the turning from lower to higher" (Taylor 1989: 140).

From Discourse to Spiritual Transformation

Though Habermas pleads for post-metaphysical orientations in our moral engagement, a careful reading of him shows that he is deeply aware of the limitations of his agenda. He recognizes that his agenda is anthropocentric, as he writes: "compassions for tortured animals and the pain caused by the destruction of the biotopes are surely manifestations of moral intuitions that cannot be fully satisfied by the collective narcissism of what in the final analysis is an anthropocentric way of looking at things" (Habermas 1990a: 211).

For Habermas, the criterion of justice is central to the idea of universal morality but, according to Agnes Heller, the idea of justice cannot be meaningfully pursued unless it involves a profound anthropological revolution. For Heller, without a conception of the Beyond and its transformative influence in our lives, the idea of justice, confined only to the political and the legislative domains, remains only a mirage, as we have seen in the last two centuries of the modern western experience. In her view,

> ..a just procedure is the condition of the goodlife — of all possible good lives — but is not sufficient for the good life...The goodlife consists of three elements: first, righteousness; secondly the development of endowments into talents, and, thirdly emotional depth in personal attachments. Among these three elements, righteousness is the overarching one. All three elements of the goodlife are beyond justice (Heller 1987: 273).

By "Beyond" Heller refers to something beyond and deeper than mere socio-political legislation. For her, justice is embodied when "goodness becomes character". For Heller, "...Beyond has the connotation of higher and not only of being different" (Heller 1987: 325-326). But it is this intimation of the "Beyond" and a transcendental height that is missing from Habermas. Habermas might not care to take note of it but he cannot justify his post-metaphysical thinking as a self-proclaimed truth and as a self-validating system. The rise of not only religious fundamentalism (in both the so-called irrational societies but also in the "rational societies" of the West) but also what one sensitive commentator has called "global

spirituality" (Cousins 1985; also see Giri 1994, Sacks 1991) shows that Habermas must justify his own neglect of the critical potential that a transcendental Sacred has in rethinking existing social arrangements and transforming our conventional institutions which chain human dignity in many guises. In this context, the work of Roberto M. Unger calls for our attention. Unger tells us:

> Imagine two kinds of sacred reality. The first is a fundamental reality or transcendent personal being; the second, the experiences of personality and personal encounter that, multiplied many times over, make up a social world. Whereas the first of these two sacreds is illusive and disputable and requires, to be recognized, the power of vision which is the ability to see the invisible, the second seems near and palpable. Whenever they can, men and women try to identify the first of these two sacreds with the second. They want to see the social world graced with the authority of an ultimate reality. But the progress of insight and the disclosures of conflict prevent this bestowal of authority. If there is a common theme in the history of human thought and politics, it consists precisely in failure to sustain claims of unconditional authority on behalf of particular ways of talking, thinking, living and organizing society. As the two sacreds lose their contact with each other, the distant one fades away into an ineffable, longed for reality without any clear message for understanding and conduct. The nearby becomes profane and arbitrary (Unger 1987: 576).

This observation shows how in the contemporary political discourse the idea of a transcendental Sacred is being invoked as a frame of criticism and transformation. Habermas must take note of Unger since Unger is a political theorist like him and not simply a preacher or a theologian. For Unger, when people are only bound to the sacredness of the existing social contexts, "nothing is left to them but to choose one of these worlds and to play by its rules" (Unger 1987: 577). These rules, though "decisive" in their influence, are ultimately "groundless" (ibid). Unger argues that when the decisiveness of the present social world, presenting itself as a sacred order, "arises precisely from its lack of any place within a hierarchy of contexts" (ibid), then "there is no larger defining reality to which it can seem as the vehicle or from whose standpoint it can be criticized" (Unger 1987: 577).

Prophetic criticism comes closest to the kind of critical engagement that Unger has in mind here. Not only in the traditional past but also in varieties of contemporary societies criticisms of modern institutions of human indignity such as racism and slavery, etc. have been the work of the prophets — be it Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr, who, it must not be forgotten, have used the name of God to build their movements against forces of oppression. Even in modern critical social movements we are "back to the beginning," to use the words of Michel Walzer, where social critic is a prophet (Walzer 1988).

It is perhaps for these reasons that Dallmayr does not look at Habermas' "discourses ethics" as a categorical shift from the Kantian deontological morality. "Discourse ethics", Habermas writes, "picks up the basic intent of Hegel's thought in order to redeem it with Kantian means" (quoted in Dallmayr 1991: 117). But for Dallmayr there is no scope for genuine redemption in the Habermasian agenda. Dallmayr argues that the "supportive life forms" that Habermas requires for his discourse ethics to be embodied are those which can be happily found in modern western societies" (Dallmayr 1991: 120). For Dallmayr, concrete life forms persist less because, but in spite of " decontextualized universalism" since "more reason is abstracted and universalized" enclaves of moral life become increasingly "denuded or stripped of prudential-rational resources"(ibid). Thus he argues that Habermas "makes reference to the alleviation of suffering or of 'damaged life' but only as a marginal gloss not fully integrated in his arguments" (Dallmayr 1991: 126).

Habermas uses rational argumentation as the key to the realization of moral consciousness. But in traditions of spiritual criticisms there is a much more inclusive approach to rationality and morality which is illustrated in the work of a critic such as Sri Aurobindo. Aurobindo is a multi-dimensional critic of the human condition and is noted for his works such as *Human Cycles, Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga, and Future Poetry.* Aurobindo does not discount the significance of reason for the origin and growth of morality but wants us to have a proper perspective regarding "the office and limitations of reasons" (ibid). Much like Habermas, he argues that reason and rational development have played a key role in our being human. In his discussion of "the curve of rational age" in *Human Cycles* he argues that "the present age of mankind" is characterized "from the point of view of a graded psychological evolution by an attempt to discover and work out the right principle and secure foundations of rational system of society" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 181). Aurobindo himself argues, reminding us of Habermas, that "an attempt to universalize first of

all the habit of reason and the application of intelligence and the intelligent will to life" has played a crucial role in the shift from the "infrarational" to the "rational" age (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 179). He also wants us to appreciate the crucial significance of reason in understanding the validity of traditions.[12]

Like Habermas's plea for undistorted communication, Aurobindo also sensitizes us to the distortion that power can introduce in the working of a rational discourse and the realization of even its inherent emancipatory potential. In his words: "The reason which is to be universally applied, cannot be the reason of a ruling class: for in the present imperfection of the human race that always means the fettering and misapplication of reason degraded into servant of power to maintain the privileges of the ruling class...*It must be the reason of each and all seeking for a basis of agreement*" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 184; emphasis added).

But even though reason is so important for moral development and evolution (both phylogenetic and ontogenetic) it cannot be a sole foundation of morality. Aurobindo accords this role to spirit, not to reason. For him, both order and evolution in life involves "interlocking of an immense number of things that are in conflict with each other" and discovering "some principle of standing-ground of unity" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 201). Reason cannot perform this function because "The business of reason is indeterminate...In order that it may do its office, it is obliged to adopt temporarily fixed view points" (ibid). When reason becomes the sole arbiter of life and morality, "every change becomes or at least seems a thing doubtful, difficult and perilous...while the conflict of view points, principles, systems leads to strife and revolution and not to basis of harmonious development" (ibid). For Aurobindo, harmony can be achieved only when the "soul discovers itself in its highest and completest spiritual reality and effects a progressive upward transformation of its life values into those of the Spirit; for they will all find their spiritual truth and in that truth their standing-ground of mutual recognition and reconciliation..." (ibid).

For Aurobindo, the inadequacy of reason to become the governor of life and morality lies in man's transitional nature-half animal and half divine. He believes that "the root powers of human life, its intimate causes are below, irrational, and they are above, suprarational". It is for this reason that "A purely rational society could not come into being and, if it could be born, either could not live or sterilize or petrify human existence" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 114). He argues: "If reason were the secret, highest law of the universe...it might be possible for him by the power of the reason to evolve out of the dominance of the infrarational Nature which he inherits from the animal...But his nature is rather transitional; the rational being is only a middle term of Nature's evolution. A rational satisfaction cannot give him safety from the pull from below nor deliver him from the attraction from above" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 206). Aurobindo uses reason but unlike Habermas does not take it as the be all and end all of life. For him , "The solution lies not in reason but in the soul of man, in its spiritual tendencies. *It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that alone can create a perfect human order.* It is spiritual, a greater than rational enlightenment that can alone illumine the vital nature of man and impose harmony on its self-seekings, antagonisms and discord" (ibid; emphasis added).

An ideal society, for Aurobindo, is not a mere "rational society" but a "spiritual society". A society founded on spirituality is not governed by religion as a mere social organization where society uses religion "to give an august, awful and ... eternal sanction to its mass of customs and institutions" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 211). A spiritual society is not a theocratic society but a society guided by the quest of the spirit. A spiritual society regards man not only as a "mind, a life and a body, but as a soul incarnated for a divine fulfillment upon earth, not only in heavens beyond, which after all it need not have left if it had no divine business here in the world of physical, vital and mental nature" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 213).

Sri Aurobindo's idea of the highest stage of morality is close to the Kohlberg-Habermas idea of the post-conventional stage of moral development. Like the Habermasian idea of post-conventional stage of morality, Aurobindo's idea of morality is not an extension of the collective egoism of a particular society. But what distinguishes his idea of morality is invocation of God not only as a tertiary factor but also as a constituting factor in the dyadic relationship between the Self and the Other. For him, "the seeking for God is also, subjectively, the seeking for our highest, truest, fullest, largest Self" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 136). He argues that, "ethics is not in its essence a calculation of good and evil in action of a laboured effort to be blameless according to the standards of the world - these are only crude appearances - it is an attempt to grow into divine nature" (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 143). Let us hear him in his own words about the probable more reassuring route towards moral consciousness and communicative action:

ethics only begins by the demand upon [man] of something other than his personal preference, vital pleasure or material self-interest; and this demand seems at first to work on him through the necessity of his relations with others. But that this is not the core of the matter is shown by the fact that the ethical demand does not always square with the social demand, nor the ethical standard always coincide with the social standard. His relations with others and his relations with himself are both of them the occasions of his ethical growth, but that which determines his ethical being is his relations with God, the urge of the Divine whether concealed in his nature or conscious in his higher self or inner genius. He obeys an inner deal, not to a social claim or a collective necessity. The ethical imperative comes not from around, but from within him and above him (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 141).

Beyond the Technology of Power: Spirituality and the Technology of the Self

In his *The Imperative of Responsibility,* Hans Jonas (1984: 141) argues: "It must be understood that we are here confronted with a dialectic of power which can only be overcome by a further degree of power itself, not by quietist renunciation of power". This more power, in Jonas's own view, has to emanate from society and supposedly can break the tyrannical automation of power. Jonas is articulating a point of view towards ethical responsibility which is more widely shared among interpreters and actors today.[13] The crux of this approach lies in the belief that by having more power we can solve the ethical problems confronting us today.[14] But such politicization of morality removes the "inner life from the sphere of the moral," making it impossible to articulate proper moral concepts (Edelman 1990: 53). But a spiritual approach to ethics and morality brings the "inner life" of the actors to the heart of their moral consciousness and communicative action. Spirituality not only retrieves the inner life of the actors and juxtaposes it to their outer life but also continuously strives to critically scrutinize the structure of desire of the inner life and subject it to transformative criticism. This transformed inner life becomes a source of transformational criticism of the logic of power in society.

Habermas's discourse ethics shares the above-mentioned problems of an approach to morality where the logic of power reigns supreme over the creative desire and the devotional dynamics of the self. Though Habermas makes a distinction between technology of power and technology of self (see for instance, Habermas 1987b), his critical theory in general and perspective on discourse ethics in particular scarcely scratches the surface of technology of self. To be fair to him, Habermas is deeply concerned with the need for self-reflection on the part of the actors but he limits this to the context of therapeutic dialogue between the patient and the analyst. Habermas does not explore the possibility of autonomous self-discovery without the mediation of the therapist.

Spirituality here suggests a different route. Spiritual traditions stress that self-knowledge and self-reflection go together. Aurobindo, for instance, proposes yoga as a synthetic mechanism where "Yoga is a methodological effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and Transcendent Existence" (Sri Aurobindo 1950: 2). Yoga is a practical psychology of self-perfection to help God complete Her unfinished task of creation. Its objective is transformation and making possible a higher stage of evolution here on Earth, not individual moksha (salvation). Yoga helps us to overcome our "separative ignorance" (Sri Aurobindo 1950: 618). The practice of Yoga helps us to go beyond altruism and egoism, good and evil where we are able to "take a wider psychological view of the primary forces of our nature" (ibid). Through the practice of Yoga "there grows an immediate and profound sympathy and immixture of mind with mind, life with life, a lessening of the body's insistence on separateness, a power of direct mental and other intercommunication and effective mutual action which helps out now the inadequate indirect communication and action.." (Sri Aurobindo 1950: 615). Yoga enables individuals to have a right relation with the collectivity where the individual does not "pursue egoistically, his own material or mental progress or spiritual salvation without regard to his fellows", nor does he "maim his proper development" for the sake of the community but sums up in himself "all its [community's] best and completest possibilities and pour them out by thought, action and all other means on his surroundings so that the whole race may approach nearer to the attainment of its supreme potentialities" (Sri Aurobindo 1950: 17).

A spiritual approach to self-reflection, for instance as that of Yoga, proceeds with a different relationship between knowledge and human interest or knowledge and power. In the spiritual traditions of practice and

inquiry, knowledge whether of self or other, or of both, is not for having power over the Other but for becoming an instrument of service and creativity in the genuine growth and development of the Other. This creative service begins with enhancing the "functioning" and "capability"[15] of the other and aims at the spiritual transformation of their consciousness. The urge of the seekers within traditions of spiritual practice and inquiry, as Rabindra Nath Tagore puts it in one of his poems, is to fulfill one's life through self-sacrifice and presenting oneself as a gift to the other.

The idea of discourse in the traditions of spiritual transformation is also different from the over-politically determined view of discourse in modernity. Discourse here is not confined to politically significant utterances nor is it only full of speech acts. In spiritual traditions, silence is also an important part of discourse. It is undoubtedly true that the discourse that the participants in Habermasian discourse ethics are engaged in is not confined to the political; in fact its critical significance lies in the fact that it is carried out in the life world. But in order to realize the search for multidimensional criticism such as therapeutic criticism and aesthetic criticism that the participants in discourse ethics are engaged in there is a need for them to participate in the spiritual dialectic of silence and utterances as well.

It is an integral part of spiritual realization that money and power are not the sole measures of a good life; they must be provided normative direction by the quest for meaning in discovering the depth dimension of one's Being and creating bonds of intersubjectivity (see Bellah et al 1991). This realization affects the technology of self that the actors seek to cultivate. Robert Bellah and his colleagues describe some of these ideally imagined modes of practices and criticism (Bellah et al 1991). The following critique of consumerism that Bellah and his colleagues provide is an instance of spiritual criticism which bears a lot of suggestions for transformation for the participants in discourse ethics: "Consumerism kills the soul as any good Augustinian can see because it places things before the valuing of God and human community" (Bellah et al 1991: 211). Bellah and his colleagues also suggest pattern of cultivation as an appropriate mode of being in the world today - a pattern characterized by a spiritual attentiveness to the need of the others. For Bellah and his colleagues, "Attending means to concern ourselves with the larger meanings of things in the longer run, rather than with short term pay offs" (Bellah et al 1991: 273).

By the Way of Conclusion:
From Practical Discourse to Practical Spirituality

Habermas does not "tie the criterion of rationality to the idea of self-constituting subject of history, he locates it in the basic context of action, in talk between subjects" (Wagner and Zipprian 1989: 103). This is the problem with the Habermasian approach to rationality. The key question is can we have such a view of rationality or what he calls communicative rationality and realize the ends that he sets for himself: adequate motivational development of actors for them to be able to act upon their moral realization as critics and transformers? Can his procedure of rational argumentation actualize his worthy expectation that participants in discourse ethics realize that one who recognizes the interests of others "does not really sacrifice himself, but becomes a larger self" (Habermas 1987a: 94)? Realizing these goals requires a wider view of rationality where it is part of the consciousness of actors — a consciousness which is simultaneously rational and supra-rational, rational and spiritual.

Habermas believes that at the highest stage of moral development internal nature is moved into a "utopian perspective" (Habermas 1979: 93). At this stage, internal nature is not subject to the "demands of ego autonomy; rather through a dependent ego it obtains free access to interpretive possibilities" (ibid). He also hopes that moral consciousness as a kind of critique would terminate in a "transformation of the affective-motivational basis" of actors (Habermas 1972: 234). But my argument in this paper has been that his rational approach is incapable of realizing these worthy ideals; it has to be supplemented by spiritual praxis.

Habermas speaks of practical discourse. Communicative interaction is the most important part of this practical discourse. This practical discourse can be part of a practical spirituality (Metz 1970; Vivekananda 1991). Practical spirituality, as Swami Vivekananda argues, urges us to realize that "the highest idea of morality and unselfishness goes hand in hand with the highest idea of metaphysical conception" (Vivekananda 1991: 354). This highest conception pertains to the realization that man himself is God: "You are that Impersonal

Being: that God for whom you have been searching all over the time is yourself—yourself not in the personal sense but in the impersonal" (Vivekananda 1991: 332). The task of practical spirituality begins with this realization but does not end there: its objective is to transform the world. The same Swami Vivekananda thus challenges: "The watchword of all well-being of all moral good is not "I" but "thou". Who cares whether there is a heaven or a hell, who cares if there is an unchangeable or not? Here is the world and it is full of misery. Go out into it as Buddha did, and struggle to lessen it or die in the attempt" (Vivekananda 1991: 353). What practical spirituality stresses is that the knowledge that one is Divine, one is a part of a Universal Being, facilitates this mode of relating oneself to the world. This knowledge is however not for the acquisition of power over the other rather it is to worship her as God. In the words of Vivekananda: "Human knowledge is not antagonistic to human well-being. On the contrary, it is knowledge alone that will save us in every department of life, in knowledge as worship" (Vivekananda 1991: 353).

This plea for practical discourse being part of a practical spirituality has to be understood in the context of the emergent contours of religious evolution of our times which point to a new direction. In this direction exists not only religious fundamentalism but also an urge for spiritual realization on the part of the believers which is not confined to the religions to which they belong. People of faith also now realize that spiritual realization is possible only through addressing the concrete problems of man and woman who live in their midst. In the words of E.H. Cousins, "people of faith now rediscover the material dimensions of existence and their spiritual significance" (Cousins 1985: 7).

The realization of practical spirituality in the dynamics of self, culture, and society is as much a normative ideal as the building of a rational society or realization of a state of undistorted communication. The coming of a spiritual society requires both the "reflexive mobilization of self" (Giddens 1991) as well as building up of alternative communities which are founded on the principles of practical spirituality. According to Aurobindo, the coming of a spiritual society begins with the spiritual fulfillment of the urge to individual perfection but ends with the building of a "new world, a change in the life of humanity or, at the least, a new perfected collective life in the earth - nature" (Sri Aurobindo 1950: 1031). "This calls for the appearance not only of isolated evolved individuals acting in the uninvolved mass, but of many gnostic individuals forming a new kind of beings and a new common life superior to the present individual and common existence. A collective life of this kind must obviously constitute itself on the same principle as life of the gnostic individual" (ibid).

These gnostic individuals are seekers and bearers of the multi-dimensional transformation of practical spirituality. But these gnostic individuals are not the Nietzschian supermen driven by the will to power; they are animated by a will to serve and desire to transform the contemporary condition and to build a good society. They don't form a type or a caste of chosen people to dominate this world and interpret its urge for meaning. What Connolly writes below so aptly sums up the spiritual seekers who are going to carry forward the task of moral consciousness and communicative action well into the future:

> But this typological differentiation between man and overman no longer makes much sense, if it ever did. For the overman — constituted as an independent, detached type—refers simultaneously to a spiritual disposition and to the residence of free spirits in a social space relatively insulated from reactive politics. If there is anything in the type to be admired, the ideal must be dismantled as a distinct caste of solitary individuals and folded into the political fabric of late modern society. The 'overman' now falls apart as a set of distinct dispositions concentrated in a particular caste or type, and its spiritual qualities migrate to a set of dispositions that may compete for presence in any self. The type now becomes (as it actually was to a significant degree) a voice in the self contending with other voices including those of resentiment (Connolly 1991: 187).

[This paper builds upon an earlier paper of mine entitled, "In Quest of a Universal Morality: Jurgen Habermas and Sri Aurobindo," which has come out recently in *The Indian Journal of Social Science*, New Delhi. In preparing this, I have been enriched by the comments and criticism of the anonymous reviewers for *Theory, Culture and Society, Theory and Society, Cultural Anthropology* and *International Sociology* to all of them I express my gratitude. I am also grateful to Professors Anthony Giddens, Chitta Ranjan Das, J.N. Mohanty, Thomas Pantham, Richard Grathoff, C.T. Kurien, P. Radhakrishnan, M.S.S. Pandian, and Mr. Venkatesh Chakrabarthy for many valuable insights and criticisms. However, I alone am responsible for whatever gaps and incoherences which still persist in this work.]

Notes

1. Habermas describes for us what he means by linguistification of Sacred:

   The disenchantment and disempowering of the domain of the sacred takes place by way of linguistification of the rituals secured, basic normative agreement; going along with this is a release of the rationality potential in communicative action. The aura of rapture and the tenor that emanates from the sacred, the spellbinding power of the holy, is sublimated into the binding/ bonding force of criticizable validity claims and at the same time turned into everyday occurrence" (Habermas 1987a: 77).

   Habermas, further, tells us about the implications of such an evolutionary shift:

   Norm-guided interaction changes in structure to the degree that functions of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization pass from the domain of the sacred over to that of everyday communicative practice. In the process, the religious community that made social cooperation possible is transformed into a communicative community striving under the pressure to cooperate (Habermas 1987a: 91).

2. It has to be acknowledged here that there is differing interpretation of the influence of Kant in Habermas. For some, Habermas's categories are less aprioristic than Kant.

3. In this context we might take note of what William Baldamus, an insightful commentator on Habermas, writes. According to Baldamus, "...there can be no doubt that Habermas' graphical diagrams are created intuitively. Ironically, in his own terminology this means they have no rational foundation, although in logical terms their credibility may be unquestionable" (Baldamus 1992: 102).

4. According to David Bidney, "An individual is said to be morally free insofar as he acts in conformity with the requirements of his "true good" and his "true self".. Moral freedom and cultural freedom don't coincide" (Bidney 1967: 453).

5. In this context, Thomas Mccarthy tells us:

   "If taking modern pluralism seriously means giving up the the idea that philosophy can single out a privileged way of life..., it does not,in Habermas's view, preclude a general theory of a much narrower sort, namely a theory of justice" (quoted in Habermas 1990a: vii).

6. As Habermas writes: "Within the horizon of the life world, practical judgments derive both their concreteness and their power to motivate action from their inner connection to unquestioningly accepted ideas of the good life, in short, from their connection to ethical life and its institutions. Under these conditions, problematization can never be so profound as to risk all the assets of the existing ethical life, but the abstractive achievements required by the moral point of view do precisely that" (Habermas 1990a: 109).

7. In so far as the need for describing richly the work of inter-subjectivity is concerned, the following lines of Richard Rorty are insightful:"human solidarity is to be achieved not only by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow strangers...the process of coming to see other human beings as 'one of us' rather than as 'them' is a matter of detailed description of what unfamiliar people are like and redescription of what we ourselves are like" (Rorty 1989: xvi).

8. In stressing such an approach Habermas carries forward the agenda of Kant; "Thus, when practical reason cultivates itself, there insensibly arises in it a dialectic which forces it to seek aid in philosophy, just as happens to it in its theoretic use; and in this case, therefore as well as in the other, it will find rest nowhere than in a thorough critical examination of our reason" (Kant 1987: 26).

9. For Taylor, "To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what is not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary" (Taylor 1989: 28).

10. In this regard, what Charles Taylor writes is significant: "the modern idea of freedom is the strongest motive for the massive shift from substantive to procedural justification in the modern world...And if we leap from the earliest to the most recent such theory, Habermas's conception of discourse ethics is founded in part on the same consideration. The idea that norm is justified only to the extent that all could uncoercedly accept it is a new and interesting variant of procedural idea" (Taylor 1989: 86).

11. Here we can take note of the insightful arguments of philosopher Roop Rekha Verma. Verma writes: "The dialectic by itself does not explain the possibility of cultural change or critique of culture. What is important to add in this dialectic is that the internalization can be reflective or unreflective" (Verma 1991: 534).

12. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

> "Reason can accept no tradition merely for the sake of its antiquity or its greatness; it has to ask, first whether it contains the best truth available to man for the government of his life. Reason can accept no convention merely because men are agreed upon it; it has to ask whether they are right in their agreement, whether it is an inert or false acquiescence. Reason cannot accept any institution merely because it serves some purpose of life; it has to ask whether there are not greater and better purposes which can be best served by new institutions. There arises the necessity of a universal questioning and from that necessity arises the idea that society can only be perfected by the universal application of rational intelligence to the whole of life..." (Sri Aurobindo 1962: 183).

13. In the words of Jonas: "From which direction can we expect this third degree power which reinstates man in the context of his power and breaks its tyrannical automatism? It must, in the nature of the problem, emanate from society as no private insight, responsibility or fear can measure upto the tasks" (Jonas 1984: 142).

14. Ulrich Beck (1992), for instance, argues that it is the collective power of society which can address the ecological crises confronting us today.

15. I use "functioning" and "capability" in the same way as Amartya Sen does. See, Sen 1987.

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